

some years as many had fallen over. 1973, 1974 and 1975 have been very good years in this region and copious rains have fallen. A friend who recently traversed this same route to Alice Springs (October, 1975) tells me that there has been a profuse regeneration of Native Poplar, now from one to two metres high. It is interesting that whilst fire is the main factor triggering regeneration in the South-West Province, it does not perform this function in the Eremaean Province where continuing heavy falls of rain are required.

—D. H. PERRY, Victoria Park.

**Some recent bird observations from south-western Australia.**—The following notes deal with some birds I recorded while in Western Australia in February 1976.

Blue-billed Duck, *Oxyura australis*. At least three adults and five young at Lake Seppings, Albany, on February 10.

Marsh Sandpiper, *Tringa stagnatalis*. One bird at Wilson's Inlet on February 14. It was in shallow water only a few centimetres deep and at the northern end of a small island. The bird was viewed at a distance of 20-30 metres. The identification was based principally on the straight bill, light green legs and white in the forehead and foreparts of the face. The general appearance of the bird was that of a small Greenshank. In my field notes I have recorded the size of the bird as being 'slightly smaller than that of a Greenshank but hard to say positively'. The only other waders in the vicinity were a pair of Common Sandpipers *Tringa hypoleucos*, but the Marsh Sandpiper did not associate with them at all. I have previously seen the Marsh Sandpiper near Mildura, Victoria and at the I.C.I. Saltfields, Adelaide, South Australia.

Southern Emu-wren, *Malachurus stipturus*. One adult male and at least two uncoloured birds at John Forrest National Park from where this species does not appear to have been formally recorded before. These birds were seen on February 7 in a small patch of treeless dense heath with a few bare rocks, one kilometre south of the Park Kiosk and a short distance south of the Lake. The birds' long filamentous tails and the light blue breast of the male rendered them unmistakable.

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**An Asian Gull-billed Tern in Western Australia.**—On October 17, 1976 I collected one of four Gull-billed Terns at the mouth of the Lawley River in north-west Kimberley. The specimen was later identified as *Sterna nilotica affinis* Horsfield of south-eastern China. Its shorter wing, less stout bill, darker rump and tail, and eclipse plumage readily separate it from Australian birds (adults of which retain their nuptial plumage throughout the year). Even a juvenile Australian bird in our collection with spotted wings has a white rump and tail.

Details of specimen (registered number A14658): exposed culmen 38 mm, wing 282 mm, tail 104 mm, tarsus 30 mm, iris dark brown, upper mandible black, lower mandible black with basal portion orange, feet and legs dark brown, mouth orange. Wings and entire upperparts including tail dull steel grey, a well-defined black stripe through the eye, head flecked black, underparts white. Judging from the plumage stages given in Witherby *et al.* (*The Handbook of British Birds*, vol. 5, p. 14). The bird was over a year old and moulting into its first summer plumage.

Several subspecies of the Gull-billed Tern are currently recognized. Australian birds (*S. n. macrotarsa*) are the largest with palest upperparts (whitish grey back and white rump and tail) and have the most massive bill. Length of wing, tail and bill in the Lawley River bird are well below the range (310-354, 111-141 and 40.0-46.4 respectively) given for Australian birds by Serventy, Serventy and Warham (*The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*, 1971, p. 206). Few measurements are available for *affinis*; however Witherby *et al.* state that it has a shorter wing and rather shorter